1: Lowie E-5 (1926) 1939 NT20 Washo NT20

ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES ON THE WASHO

BY

ROBERT H. LOWIE

I. INTRODUCTION

A SKETCH by Barrett, mainly relating to museum specimens, Kroeber's list of kinship terms, Hudson's notes on games in Culin's monograph, and a few mythological texts by Dangberg constitute our technical sources on the Washo.[1] Several weeks at Minden, Nevada (informant, Dave Cheney), and at Coleville, California (principal informants, Jack Pitts and Bill Cornbread), in 1926 supplied the data here offered.

The Washo (waco, woco), classed either as an isolated stock or as an aberrant Hokan group, ranged about Lake Tahoe (t'i''yeli ta''au), residing in westernmost Nevada and easternmost California. Carson City, Reno, Minden, and Gardnerville, Nevada, fall within ancient Washo territory, as do Truckee, Tallac, and Woodfords, California. According to Barrett, even a small region west of the Sierra, on the headwaters of the Mokelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus rivers, falls within the Washo area. Kroeber sets their total number in 1770 at possibly 1500, one-third of the total being in California, where more recent figures indicate approximately 300. But separatism was extreme: Jack Pitts had been to Lake Tahoe a single time, political units hardly embraced more than six or seven families, and only festivals united larger gatherings.

Bill distinguished the Washo about Woodfords and of Antelope Valley as ha'ɲalɛ'lt'i, those near Minden and Gardnerville being p'a''walu, and the Reno Washo we'lmɛlt'i. Though distinct, these groups had never waged war with one another. Bill associated the Washo with Mountain House and Bagley Valley but did not consider Antelope Valley ancient Washo territory, rather assigning it to the "Paiute," that is, Paviotso. When about 30, he himself came there, and at that time there were not many Washo in that locality.

Three alien tribes figure prominently: the "Paiute," that is, Paviotso (pa''le.u), whom the Carson Valley Washo sometimes visited near the Walker River; the "Digger," that is, Maidu (teobi'muc), about Placerville and Colfax; and "another kind of Digger" (tannu'), distinct in speech from the Maidu,—presumably Miwok. The two former were definitely noted as periodically hostile, the Washo trying to exclude both from Lake Tahoe. The Maidu often took game away from the Washo, even killing them, and thus precipitated fighting.

[1] S. A. Barrett, The Washo, PMM–B 2:1–52, 1917. Grace Dangberg, Washo Texts, UC–PAAE 22:391–443, 1927. A. L. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, BAE–B 78:569–573, 944, 1925. S. Culin, Games of the North American Indians, BAE–B 24:199, 265, 322 f., 335, 396, 523, 664, 704, 1907.

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2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

INTRODUCTION.

The Washo Indians constitute a small group forming a distinct linguistic family and occupying a very small territory in the Sierra Nevada, bordering Lake Tahoe, and on the upper courses of the Carson and Truckee rivers.

While prosecuting field work for the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee, in the adjacent Paiute region of Nevada, for the special purpose of building one of its series of life-sized, groups representing the aboriginal culture areas of America, and of assembling a general collection illustrative of the Great Basin* region, an opportunity presented itself to pay a short visit to the Washo at Woodfords, California; Gardnerville and Carson City, Nevada; and on Lake Tahoe. The few days available were, of course, entirely inadequate for a thorough study of this interesting people, and therefore the information here presented is offered simply as a sketch of Washo culture with particular reference to its relation to the cultures of the two great adjacent areas: the Great Basin area on the east, and the California area on the west.

Culturally this tribe forms what might be termed a buffer between these two great western culture areas. Its situation,

*The term Great Basin as here used refers to the Great Basin region lying between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada, and comprising roughly the states of Utah and Nevada. For purposes of ethnography the term should be made to extend somewhat farther south and should include a small portion of the northern plateau region; i. e., that part lying north of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and occupied by the Paiute now living on the Moapa, Shivwits, and Kaibab reservations and vicinity.

The term Plateau culture area has been hitherto applied to this region, but in view of the fact that the term is, from a standpoint of physiography, a misnomer, and that the term Great Basin, is generally accepted as the name for this physiographic division of the continent, it seems best to adopt it for anthropology as well. Especially is this advisable since the name is so perfectly descriptive of this region and since the cultural limits of its inhabitants so closely approximate the limits of the Great Basin area when considered from a physiographic standpoint.

The accepted names of other areas of North America are generally applicable both to the physiography and the culture of the areas involved, as the Plains area, Arctic area, etc. Consequently the name Great Basin area appears equally appropriate when applied to this circumscribed region, with its great number of small, disconnected sinks and saline lakes extending from the Wasatch range on the east to the Sierra Nevada on the west, and embracing such saline bodies as the Great Salt Lake, Pyramid Lake, Lake Winnamucca, and Walker Lake, which are simply remnants of the great quaternary lakes Bonneville and Lahonton, that formerly covered much of the Great Basin.

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

●101 combined with the peculiar natural environment, has produced a material culture which contains many features of both these areas and which shows certain interesting local adaptations and modifications.

ENVIRONMENT.

131/133 The Washo territory lies partly on the western margin of the arid, Great Basin region of Nevada, and partly on the more densely wooded eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. It also extends up into the heavily timbered and well watered high Sierra region and even, in a small area on the headwaters of the Moquelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus rivers, reaches down for some distance on the western slope of this range.* Its western limit can, however, in general be stated as the crest of the Sierra Nevada range. Its eastern limit is, generally speaking, the low range between the Carson river and the Walker river drainages. Thus the territory of the Washo lies almost entirely on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, and extends out into the semi-arid eastern foothills of this range. The accompanying map shows these limits only approximately, as time did not permit a careful investigation of this subject.

133 Within this restricted territory are found two very distinct types of natural environment, each with its typical fauna and flora. The one, that of the semi-desert basin (plate II)[1]; the other, that of the well timbered and well watered Sierra (plate I).[2] The latter tends to produce features characteristic of the eastern part of the California culture area. The semi-arid sands of the eastern part 137 of the Washo territory bear a flora characterized by low brush, various grasses which yield seeds used for food and, on the desert [262] mountains, by a particular species of pine, the pifion, whose nuts constitute such an important article of food throughout much of the Great Basin culture area. The well watered mountains of the

*See the author's "Geography and Dialects of the Miwok Indians," Univ. Calif. Publ., Am. Arch. Ethn. VI, 347 and map 3, 1908. Also Dixon's "The Northern Maidu," Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XVII, 136, and pl. XXXVIII, 1905.

1/1 [The author may be referring to plate I, fig. 2 here, see cat. 116, p. 29 - An.]

2/1 [See plate I, fig. 1, Cat. 116, P. 29 - An.]

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

The well watered mountains of the western part of the Washo territory produce a flora characterized by heavy forests of cedar, spruce, and several of the larger species of pine, and in its extreme western part by the presence of the

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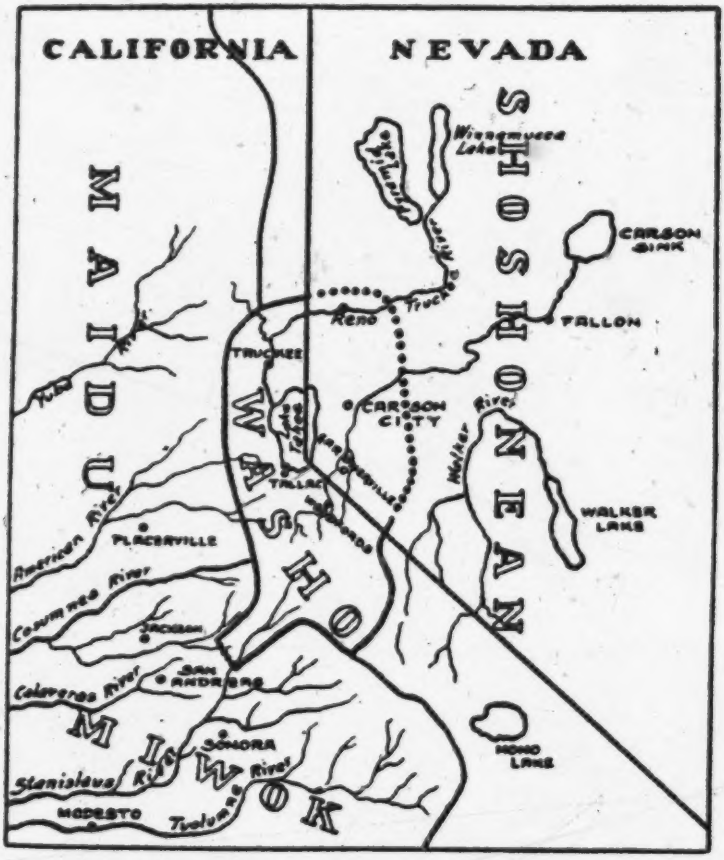

Map 1. Showing the Washo territory and that of surrounding tribes.

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sequoia and the oak, whose acorns are used to some extent as food; thus introducing here a distinctly Californian element.

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The fauna of the two sections presented, in primitive times, similar differences. That of the arid region was characterized

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2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

136 174 chiefly by the rabbit and various other small mammals; that of the Sierra region by larger mammals, such as the mountain sheep, deer, and bear.

[133] Even in the arid section of this area there were fairly large streams fed by the melting snows of the high Sierra, and fish of various kinds were abundant. In fact fishing was a highly important vocation, even of the Paiute living over in the region still farther to the east, especially about Pyramid, Winnamucca, and Walker lakes. In the higher mountain section of the Washo country, notably at Lake Tahoe, fishing was, perhaps, the most important phase of this culture. The heavy snows made these higher altitudes undesirable for winter residence, but the Indians spent much time there during the summer months, attracted especially by the abundance of lake trout.

[226] [132] [221]

101 174 177 Of the two environments of the Washo, that of the arid Great Basin rather predominated, which fact, combined with the facility of communication and the consequently more frequent association of the Washo with their eastern neighbors than with those to the west, produced a culture in which Great Basin features are somewhat in the ascendancy. However, there are many features of the Washo culture which are very similar to those of the Miwok and Maidu of the California area.

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SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

177 182 Since the coming of the whiteman and the consequent dispossession of the Indians, the social system of the Washo has been largely disrupted. The following outline of their social organization, therefore, depicts the aboriginal condition of the Washo, though at the present time no villages in the old sense remain, and chieftainship is largely nominal.

621 [594] [619] The social organization of the Washo is primarily based upon the family unit. The village community is the largest division and each village is entirely distinct from all the others. Apparently there is no approach to a tribal organization, though this exists among the tribes immediately to the east.

3: Cartwright U-4 (no date) 1955 NT20 Washo NT20

stick of gum to pieces of yard goods and a loaf of bread. If the family were well-to-do, they bought the gifts themselves. (Teena's family bought $75.00 worth of gifts.) If the family were poor, others would help them buy gifts. After this Teena ran to the nearest water and bathed the paint from her body. The nearest water was the Carson River, about three-quarters of a mile away. She went into the water wearing only the brassière and breechcloth, though it was the middle of winter and cold.

The territory of the Washo Indians lies almost entirely on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains, and extends out into the semi-arid eastern foothills, partly in the State of California and partly in Nevada. Lake Tahoe, which is on the borderline between the two States, is the centre of the area.

S. A. Barrett[1] states that the Washo Indians form either an aberrant Hokan group or a distinct linguistic family with cultural relationships to the California tribes Maidu and Miwok to the west, and the Great Basin Shoshonean tribes Paiute and Shoshone to the east. The relationship to the California area tribes appears in the use of the conical slab-dwelling and semi-subterranean ceremonial house; in the boulder mortar, cobblestone pestle, and soap-root meal brush; and in the use of acorn as a food. The relationship is also evident in the prominence of certain types of fine, coiled basketry and in a considerable number of geometric patterns bearing descriptive names. The similarities to the tribes of the Great Basin region to the east are shown by identical foods and in the similar methods employed in securing these foods, especially in that certain nets are used in fishing and rabbit-hunting and that similar methods are employed in handling the *pinon* nut and other vegetable foods. The twined basketry resembles very closely that of the Great Basin cultures, and certain stone implements are also very similar. Barrett also says that the Washo are more closely allied to the Great Basin area than to the California area. He does not mention the puberty ceremony in his publication.

A. L. Kroeber[2] states that the puberty dance for girls was practised, perhaps in a Shoshonean guise, since neither the valley Maidu, the hill Miwok, nor the Yokuts give this dance in developed form.

Robert H. Lowie[3] reports that the most important dance was the girls' puberty ceremony, and he says it was still common in the Carson Valley. According to one of his informants, named Jack, 'A girl menstruating for the first time always informs her mother. She is laid on the warm ashes put into a pit, but is allowed to sleep inside the hut. She fasts for four days, but drinks an infusion of sugar-pine leaves. Men must not touch her clothes, or approach her before the puberty dance, lest deer and antelope run away. The fast makes her live longer and keeps her from getting hungry in later life. If she ate, she would die young and would neither grow properly nor get along well. After the four-day period, the father goes around summoning people, who gather for the dance. Weak from fasting, the girl supports herself with a stick . . . about seven feet high, which is planted into the ground. Its wood is light, and the adolescent's mother has painted it red all over. This pole will aid the girl in later life.

'After the ceremony her father takes it far up into the hills, where he plants it in a hole in a rock; and when she is somewhat older her legs will not weaken in climbing a mountain. Henceforth the stick is not touched. Men and women both dance, always at night, and on the fourth night until morning. An attendant dances with the adolescent to support her because of her weakness. A giving away of presents . . . takes place in the girl's honour; various relatives, dancing in the centre of the space, give away money, people being free to come for five or ten cents from the hands of the mother or other kinsfolk. Fires are kept up outside the ring of dancers, who form a closed circle, singing at the same time. The song leader was com-

4:Downs E-5 (no date) 1961 NT20 Washo NT20

[P.365, A]
[Introductory, P.Vi is blank]

WASHO RELIGION

by

JAMES F. DOWNS

INTRODUCTION

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131 This paper will devote itself to a description of the religious life of the Washo Indians living in the communities of Sierraville, Loyalton, and Woodfords, in California, and Reno, Carson City, and Dresslerville, Nevada. Smaller numbers are scattered throughout the area which was their aboriginal range, roughly from the southern end of Honey Lake to Antelope Valley and from the divide of the Pinenut Range in Nevada, almost to Placerville, California.

114 A short ethnography by Barrett dealing in large part with material culture, Lowie's Ethnographic Notes, and Stewart's Element Lists constitute almost the only general references on Washo culture. Various other writers have dealt with specialized questions such as linguistics (Kroeber, Jacobson), peyotism (Siskin, d'Azevedo), and music (Merriam).

161 Most of the statements about the Washo give the im-
114 pression that they have long been on the edge of oblivion (Mooney, Kroeber, etc.), and population estimates have been well under one thousand for the past fifty years. However, I find myself in agreement with d'Azevedo[1] that the Washo are a vigorous and continuing cul-
● 101 tural entity. My own rather impressionistic estimate of population is that there are perhaps two thousand Indians in the area who consider themselves as Washo and form a part of a viable cultural unit.

114 My own field work was devoted to an attempt to trace the patterns of change among these people since
[115] the entrance of the white man into their area. To this end I spent a great deal of time with older informants,
[178] but my work was not exclusively "salvage ethnography." Many aspects of Washo culture have changed dramatically in the past century; this is particularly true in the area of material culture and subsistence activities.
114 On the other hand, I was impressed by the tenacity of
182 the less material aspects of the culture. The always-difficult-to-define world view or ethos of the Washo, which so clearly separates them from other cultures, is very much an entity expressed in the attitudes and actions of the Washo Indians, whether they are oldsters who can remember many aspects of the "old days" or children who have not yet entered the newly integrated schools of Nevada. This continuity seems most clearly expressed in the area which we subsume under the title "Religion." Almost all Washo, even the youngsters, are familiar with, or at least aware of, Washo mythology, attitudes about ghosts, spirits, medicine, and a number of ritual actions and beliefs which are common elements in Washo life today.

This is not to imply that Washo religious activity has not been affected by the tremendous changes which have taken place in western Nevada and eastern California. I suggest that rather than disappearing under

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[1] W. L. d'Azevedo, basing his opinions on extensive field work in the area, contends that early estimates of Washo population were incorrect and that modern figures based on these estimates are inaccurate. A contemporary estimate, made by a resident journalist in 1881, was somewhat over 3,000.

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date) 1925 NT20 Washo NT20

CHAPTER 38.

THE WASHO.

Affiliations, 569; habitat, 569; numbers, 570; culture, 571; basketry, 571; dress and implements, 572; buildings, 572; religion and society, 573.

AFFILIATIONS.

The Washo have been unduly neglected by students of the Indian. What little is on record concerning them makes it difficult to place them.

Their speech, which is rather easy to an English tongue and pleasant to the ear, is distinctive and very diverse from that of the Shoshonean Mono and Northern Paiute with whom they are in contact and association. Such investigation as has been made—and it has not gone very deep—points to the Washo language as being Hokan and therefore no longer to be regarded as an independent stock. Still the affiliation with other Hokan languages can not be close. The position of the Washo makes this comparative distinctness remarkable. For a detached and quasi-independent little group the Washo are on the wrong side of the Sierra. Diversity is the true Californian habit. The moment the Plateau is entered single dialects stretch for monotonous hundreds of miles, and the basic Shoshonean tongue continues without interruption across the Great Basin and even over the Rockies. Now the Washo are a Basin tribe. Their settlements were all on streams that flow eastward to be lost in the interior desert. Even as the artificial lines of statehood run they are as much a Nevadan as a Californian people. Their anomaly as a separate fragment is therefore in their location.

It is tempting to conjecture, accordingly, and especially on the basis of their probable Hokan kinship, that they are an ancient Californian tribe, which has gradually drifted, or been pressed, over the Sierra. But there are no concrete grounds other than speech to support such an assumption.

HABITAT.

The Washo territory is the upper and more fertile drainage of the Truckee and Carson Rivers—streams born in California mountains to perish in Nevada sinks. How far down they ranged on these

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date)1925 NT20 Washo NT20

two rivers has not been ascertained with accuracy. It seems to have been but a little below Reno and Carson City. Long Valley Creek, which drains northwestward into Honey Lake, a Californian stream, was also in their possession. West of the crest of the Sierra they had no settlements, but the Miwok acknowledged their hunting rights on the upper Stanislaus nearly as far down as the Calaveras Big Trees. They may have enjoyed similar privileges elsewhere. Where there are no winter villages, information is often conflicting: boundaries may have been in dispute, or amicably crossed. If the Washo hunted on the North Stanislaus they may have come down the Middle Fork also, or frequented the Calaveras, Cosumnes, or American. Sierra Valley has been assigned both to them and the northeastern Maidu. The deep snows prevented more than temporary occupation. Honey Lake, too, may have been more largely Washo than the map (Pl. 46) shows, or entirely forbidden to them.

Lake Tahoe is central to Washo territory, and was and is still resorted to in summer, but its shores are scarcely habitable in the season of snow.

The Washo call themselves Washiu or Wasiu. The names applied to them by their neighbors are unknown, except for northern Maidu Tsaisuma or Tsaisū. Northern Miwok Hisatok or Histoko means merely "easterners."

The Washo were at times in conflict with the adjacent Northern Paiute, whom they call Paleu, and by whom they are said to have been defeated about 1860.

NUMBERS.

There are the usual statements, some made as much as 50 years ago, about enormous decrease and degeneration or impending extinction; but actually the Washo seem to have suffered less diminution as a consequence of the invasion of our civilization than the vast majority of California Indians. Estimates of their population were: In 1859, 900; 1866, 500; 1892, 400; 1910, 300. The Federal census in this last year enumerated over 800, about one-third in California and two-thirds in Nevada, some three-fourths or more being full blood. As the Washo are distinctly separated from the "Paiutes" and the "California Diggers" in the local American consciousness, it is not likely that this figure involves any erroneous inclusions of consequence. Their lack of any reservation, and the semiadjustment of their life to civilized conditions, leading to a scattering habitation on the fringes of white settlements, have evidently caused a persistent underestimation of their numbers.

Their original strength may have been double what it is to-day; 1,500 or under seems a likely figure in view of the nature of their country, their solidarity, and their unity of speech.

1/1 [this plate has not been processed]
--Analyst

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date) 1925 NT20 Washo NT20

CULTURE.

The customs of the Washo will undoubtedly prove interesting once they are known. Their habitat on the flank of the Sierra Nevada must have made them in the main Californians. But being over the crest of the range, they must have had something of an eastern outlook, and their associations with the Northern Paiute, who maintained direct affiliations with the tribes in the Rocky Mountains, and were apparently subject to at least some indirect influences from the Plains, can hardly but have given the civilization of the Washo some un-Californian color.

BASKETRY.

Their basketry, which is deservedly noted for excellent finish and refinement of decorative treatment, is of the central Californian order, with coiling predominating in fine ware (Pl. 55, *f*), whereas the adjacent Shoshoneans, like most of those of the Great Basin, incline to plain and diagonal twining. The nearest analogues are in Miwok work. Both single and triple rod foundations are employed. The shapes are simple; the designs are characterized by a lack of bulk that is typical also of Miwok patterns, as well as by a delicacy and slenderness of motive to which the Miwok do not attain. The direction of the coil is from left to right, as among the Miwok and Maidu; the edge has the herringbone finish of diagonally crossed sewing, where most California tribes, except sometimes the Miwok, simply wrap the last coil.

A twined and pitched water jar is no doubt due to Shoshonean influence. The conical carrying basket is either of plain-twined wide-spaced openwork of peeled stems, as in northwestern California, or unpeeled like the wood-carrying basket of the Pomo, or diagonally twined in openwork, or closely with a pattern. The nearer Californian tribes use chiefly a narrow mesh filled in by smearing over. Oval and triangular trays, elliptical seed beaters, and the like were of the types common to all the Sierra tribes and the nearer Shoshoneans; with the weave in plain or diagonal twining. The latter technique is in use also for cooking baskets. Three-strand twining is employed for starts and reenforcements.

The almost universal basket material is willow, with fern root (*Pteridium aquilinum*) for the black of patterns, and redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) for red. The latter material was also used for warp and coiling foundation. It is said to have been imported from west of the Sierras.

Cradles are of the hooded basketry type described among the Yokuts. A band of diagonal bars or crosses—diagonals in two direc-

[This plate has not been processed -- Analyst]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE WASHO INDIANS

Habitat

At the time of their initial contacts with Whites in the middle 1800's the Washo Indians were located at Lake Tahoe and a surrounding territory in what is now California and Nevada (Nevins 1956; Sieber 1951). Varying degrees of tribal ownership of land, depending on intensity and exclusiveness of use, existed aboriginally. Washo shared residence of Antelope Valley with Northern Paiute families, were closely associated with Miwok and Maidu on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, and with the Maidu and Northern Paiute in the Honey Lake area. These "peripheral lands" of Washo territory were not considered exclusively Washo, while the "nuclear lands" were vigorously defended by them as such.

The "peripheral lands" include the widest extensions of common travel in subsistence and trading pursuits. The "nuclear lands" include the common winter residence sites and the surrounding highlands.[1] These territorial lines are the result of a synthesis of territorial descriptions by Royce (1896-7), Barrett (1917), Siskin (1938), Stewart (1941), Indian Claims Commission (1959), d'Azevedo (n.d.), and data collected by the present writer. Families undoubtedly traveled and resided beyond these areas on occasion, but their recognized was essentially within their own of the three territorial divisions of Washo territory shown by the map accompanying this text.

The gathering of food and raw materials for manufactures took the Washo on treks into areas claimed by other tribes. They went south to Antelope Valley for salt (ungabi)[2], farther south to Mono Lake for fly larvae (mats¢bab¢shi), down the Carson River to the area of Dayton for red ochre (sawasang) and on farther for fish (atabi), and they traveled down several of the large canyons 20 to 30 miles west of the crest of the Sierra Nevada for acorns (malung) and other plants. These were treks out of the Washo nuclear lands into areas where contacts with other tribes might be frequent and dangerous.

Washo territory was roughly divided into three areas by which the local groups were distinguished. These were called "northerners" (w¢lm¢lti), "easterners" (pauwalu), and "southerners" (hang¢l¢lti) (Merriam 1904, 38; Lowie 1939, 301; and Freed 1954). There was no consistent wintering in the west so that there was no distinct group of "westerners" (tang¢l¢lti).

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1. See map Plate I.
[Facing p. 74, cat. 116 -- Analyst]
2. The values of the orthographic symbols employed here are presented in Appendix A.
[see cat. 116, p. 61 ff. -- Analyst]

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[P. 350, A]

I. THE WASHO INDIANS

This chapter is a brief summary of what is known of aboriginal Washo culture, except for social organization, together with the principal changes it has undergone since the coming of the whites. The most significant characteristic of Washo acculturation from the point of view of this study has been the progressive individualization of the society. This can be seen most clearly in their economic life, where the old, coöperative methods of earning a livelihood have given way to individual wage work. The trend toward individualism has also affected ceremonial. The major ceremony of the year, the pine-nut dance, has been given up; and curing is less a group affair than it once was, with the exception of the peyotists, who constitute approximately ten per cent of the tribal membership. Warfare, another activity requiring group coöperation, was abandoned shortly after the coming of the whites. The effects upon social organization of this trend toward individualism will be traced in the following chapters.

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INFORMANTS

The sketch of Washo culture which follows is based primarily upon the sources listed below and upon data which I gathered directly in the field. My principal informants were the following: Nancy Emm, Clara Frank, Bertha Holbrook, and Hank Pete, all of Dresslerville, Nevada; Roy James, Woodfords, California; Caesar John, Markleeville, California; and Henry Rupert, Carson City, Nevada.

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SOURCES

Ethnographic accounts of the Washo are few. The principal ones are by Barrett (1917), Curtis (1926), and Lowie (1939). Stewart (1944) and Siskin (MS) have contributed two excellent studies of Washo peyotism, and Kroeber (1907) has published a brief sketch of the Washo language, which contains a list of kinship terms. Other major sources are Dangberg's (1927) collection of myths, Kroeber's (1925) brief summary of the then available data on Washo culture, Stewart's (1941) list of cultural elements, and Heizer and Elsasser's (1953) study of the archaeology of the central Sierra Nevada.

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LOCATION

The Washo Indians are a small, isolated group who speak a language tentatively placed in the Hokan stock (Sapir, 1929, p. 139). In aboriginal times they occupied the extreme western edge of Nevada and eastern California. The eastern part of their territory lay in the Great Basin and the western part in the Sierra Nevada. Aboriginal Washo territory extended from Honey Lake in the north to Sonora Pass in the south. The eastern boundary ran from Sonora Pass northward along the crest of the Pine Nut Mountains; it then turned west

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INTRODUCTION

Like many other Great Basin peoples the Washo have been unevenly studied by professional anthropologists. A common theme that runs through much of the early written comment, and into the ethnographic literature of the first few decades of this century, is the anticipation of their imminent extinction. In the very earliest accounts of mountain men and travelers they were frequently mistaken for Paiutes, and in the reports of the Indian agents of the 1850's and 60's they were seldom considered worthy of mention except as an extremely depressed and dependent group in the process of dying out or being absorbed by their more aggressive neighbors.

Population figures reported during the 19th century were highly contradictory and misleading, for they failed to take into account the extreme mobility of the Washo, and the dispersed character of settlement pattern even during the winter months. Furthermore, the Indian agents were concerned primarily with those peoples within their areas of jurisdiction who presented well defined administrative and political problems to the government in the protection of the interests of American migrants and settlers. The Washo offered minimal resistance to the intruders. They were never sufficiently organized to make effective demands in their own behalf, and within a very few years of contact part of the population had established itself in semi-sedentary dependent colonies around white settlements. It was groups of this sort -- particularly in the vicinity of major white settlements in the Carson and Truckee valleys -- that were identified as "The Washo tribe" in early reports. Little or nothing was known of actual territorial distribution of the people, and agents were ignorant of many bands that maintained some degree of autonomy and isolation.

Another factor of importance in defining the status of the Washo as a group is the placement of their territory in relation to westward American expansion. The core of this territory is made up of a chain of fertile valleys on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevadas from Antelope Valley in the south to Honey Lake in the north. The abundance of water, fish, small game, edible plants and seeds made this a relatively rich region for hunters and gatherers. The extensive growth of pinenut trees on the mountains forming the eastern boundaries of their territory and the availability of acorns on the western slope of the Sierras provided large harvests of staple seeds. Large game was also plentiful in the mountains.

The attractiveness of this region, and its potentialities for farming and grazing, were noted by the first travelers who passed through it to California after enduring the arduous trek across the dry expanse of the

N 101 131 7, Pa, Pakwi-dökadö, "chub eaters," on the S shores of Walker Lake, in Soda Spring Valley, and at Hawthorne, Nevada.

N 115 Informant.—Dan Voorhees (DV), age 66, born at Hawthorne. Father was Toe; mother "half Pakwi, half Kutsavi" (Mono Lake). Until DV was 30, he had lived at Hawthorne, then he moved to Schurz, Nevada (Walker River Reservation), where he was Indian policeman until 1935. His sight, hearing, and memory were good and he reads and writes English well. Although he seemed well informed, his information was probably equally true for the Agai (north Walker Lake) as for the Pakwi. He had acted as informant for Dr. C. Hart Merriam. He is the most Europeanized Indian I met. My attempts to interview other Indians at Schurz were fruitless.

W 131 101 8, Wa, Washo (non-Paiute). Washo territory was mostly in the Sierra Nevada Mountains surrounding Lake Tahoe. The valleys just at the eastern foot of the mountains—Truckee Meadows, Washo Lake Valley, Carson Valley, and others—served as winter homes. The territory extended from the southwestern shores of Honey Lake in the N to the North Fork of Walker River in the S. Gardnerville, Carson City, and Reno, in Nevada, are the present Washo centers.

W 115 Informants.—Charlie Rube, age 76, born near Coleville, California, at the extreme S end of Washo territory; both parents Washo. He lived winters near Minden, Nevada, for many years, spending summers near Bijou, California, on the S end of Lake Tahoe, where I found him. Charlie's faculties seemed normal, but his knowledge of English and of Washo culture was limited.

Susie Rube, age ca. 65, Charlie's wife, acted both as informant and interpreter for Charlie, although she steadfastly refused to talk openly to me. Two other old Washo women "unofficially" participated and on many points the women reached a joint decision before giving me an answer. During the four-day interview, the three old women did not let their conversation interfere with their basketmaking.

Dick Bender, 76 years old; Indian policeman at Carson City for thirty-six years (until he went blind in 1930). Dick was used especially for ethnogeographic data. He lived at Carson.

N 101 131 9, At, Atsa'kudökwa-tuviwarai, "red-butte dwellers," possessed the Quinn River drainage in northern Nevada; live now on the McDermitt Reservation in the same area.

N 115 Informants.—Pete Snap, or Nino'o (PS), aged ca. 60, half-breed, born at McDermitt. Mother an Atsa; during PS's youth she lived with her parents. PS lived most of his life at McDermitt, where I found him. Physically, he was sound in all respects. Although born after the establishment of Fort McDermitt, PS's family continued their nomadic life until he was about 14, so that he actually experienced much of the old culture. In fact, I consider my Atsa list one of the three best. PS was willing to tell all he knew and he had a very adequate command of English. I spent

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

importance. Eating peyote, praying, rubbing sage leaves on the body, fanning cedar smoke over the body, touching the ritual equipment to the body, being sprinkled with "holy" water, and smoking special cigarettes are therapeutic practices in nearly all peyote ceremonies.

Although peyote is prayed to and eaten in privacy, it is primarily used ceremonially by a congregation of believers.

The Peyote Ceremony

Periodically, usually Saturday nights, the peyotists assemble before a tipi or house which has been previously prepared for the ritual. The leader prays at the entrance; then all follow him into the meeting place, passing to the left of the altar, and proceeding clockwise in a circle to places designated by the leader. (See fig. 1.)

The altar is a half-moon of sand or earth with a large peyote button placed on it, to which prayers are addressed during the night. Smoking especially prepared cigarettes, eating peyote, praying, and singing constitute the ceremony. The ritual paraphernalia consist of a cane, fan, drum, rattle, and whistle. All but the whistle are passed clockwise, and each man sings, then beats the drum for his neighbor. The ritual varies at midnight when water is blessed and passed around, and at dawn near the close when both water and food are brought, blessed, and eaten in turn by everyone.

The foregoing sketch of the history, general ideology, and typical ritual provides a basis for understanding the peyote cult of the western Great Basin.

LOCATION OF WASHO AND NORTHERN PAIUTE

The Washo Indians, a small, isolated, Hokan-speaking group, occupied the extreme western edge of the Great Basin and the Sierra Nevada around Lake Tahoe. Woodfords, Tallac, Truckee, and Loyalton, California, are in ancient Washo territory, as are Reno, Carson City, Minden, and Gardnerville, Nevada.[1]

The Northern Paiute, a more numerous population, included in the Mono-Bannock subdivision of the Shoshonean subfamily, adjoined the Washo on the north, east, and south, possessing the western part of the Great Basin from east-central Oregon south to Owens Valley in California.[2] The Northern Paiute included in this study occupied the central and southern parts of the territory: Pyramid Lake, Walker Lake, and Fallon reservations; Smith and Mason valleys, Nevada; and in California, Mono and Inyo counties. (See map 1.)

A few Shoshone from their territory east of the Northern Paiute and a few Miwok from the west have moved into Northern Paiute lands and with the Paiute have embraced the peyote religion.

FIELD METHODS

Ethnographers must usually content themselves with studying the Indian culture of the United States when its constituent traits exist only in the memories of the aged. Even in the investigation of contemporary institutions, such as the sun dance, the shaker cult, and the peyote cult, observations are usually made years after patterns have become established; by that time individuals and circumstances relative to their introduction are already partly forgotten. That five or six years

[1] See Siskin, 1938; Lowie, 1939; and Stewart, 1939.

[2] See Stewart, 1939, and Steward, 1933, for exact limits of Northern Paiute area. Paviotso, sometimes used as synonymous to Northern Paiute, usually includes only those Paiute who live in the vicinity of Pyramid and Walker lakes, and will be used only when quoting other ethnographers.

[text continues on p. 68]